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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0776
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2760
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2142
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001460

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GEHRENBECK)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ANNOUNCE ARREST IN SAIPOV INVESTIGATION

REF: A. BISHKEK 1337

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 1320

[1](#)C. TASHKENT 1889

BISHKEK 00001460 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: DCM Lee Litzenberger, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On December 5, the Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) announced the arrest of the owner of the gun used in the October 24 murder of prominent journalist Alisher Saipov (Ref B). The MVD also released the photographs of two additional suspects in the shooting. The MVD is reportedly still investigating different theories of the case, including that the killing was ordered by religious extremist groups or by the Uzbek secret services. MVD officials had previously "excluded the possibility" of Uzbek government involvement (Ref A). In a separate action, approximately twenty journalists and supporters of Saipov also held a small rally in front of the Kyrgyz White House on December 4 to remind officials about the case. END SUMMARY.

CSI OSH: BALLISTICS EVIDENCE

[1](#)2. (U) On December 5, Melis Turganbaev, head of the Department of Organized Crime Control of the MVD, held a news conference to announce the arrest of a suspect in the October 24 slaying of prominent journalist Alisher Saipov. Turganbaev stated that the Kyrgyz authorities arrested the owner of the firearm allegedly used in the murder but stopped short of releasing his name. According to Turganbaev, ballistics tests provided evidence connecting the owner's weapon to the crime scene. Turganbaev also released the photographs of two additional suspects wanted in connection with the case and said that witnesses placed the two individuals at the crime scene for several days prior to the murder. Turganbaev also stated that the two suspects were not residents of Kyrgyzstan.

MVD FOCUSES ON FOUR POSSIBLE THEORIES OF THE CASE

13. (U) Osh Oblast MVD officials told the press that they were pursuing four theories of the case: that the murder was ordered by religious extremist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir or the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; that the Uzbek opposition party Erk organized it to embarrass the Uzbek government; that organized crime was involved; and that the Uzbek Security Services did it in response to Saipov's anti-Karimov political reporting and activity with Uzbek opposition parties. At his press conference, however, Turganbaev was quoted as saying that the MVD had "excluded" the possibility of Uzbek government involvement. Questioned about the contradiction, Bakyt Seitov, head of the MVD Press Service, told us that the MVD "could not exclude any versions, including those linking the Uzbek government" and that Turganbaev's statement was a "mistake."

RALLY HELD TO REMEMBER SAIPOV

14. (U) On December 4, a small group of approximately twenty journalists and supporters gathered outside the Kyrgyz White House to mark the fortieth day after Saipov's death. Participants tied black ribbons to the presidential compound gates and displayed an uprooted sapling to represent the life of the young journalist cut short. The main organizer, human rights activist Aziza Abdurasulova, said their goal was to remind President Bakiyev not to forget about the Saipov case, especially as he ordered the investigation be conducted under his personal control. MVD officials dispersed the crowd in less than an hour.

Comment

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15. (C) Progress in the investigation -- at least reported progress -- has been slow. It is a hopeful sign that the MVD has made an arrest connected to the shooting, but the larger question of who was behind Saipov's assassination remains unresolved.

YOVANOVITCH